



## **Some Words about Problems of “Uncontroversial Crimea”**

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Consequences of the Russian-Georgian conflict and the recognition, by the Russian Federation, of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence that threatens the territorial integrity of Georgia, incorporate not only the absence of a consolidated policy of Ukrainian politicians on this issue. Actions of Russia on the post-Soviet space in the zone of frozen conflicts in the Caucasus urged to look for new opportunities to legitimate power of separatists in Trans-Dniestria, including relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the Nagorny Karabakh. Yet inside and outside Ukraine, this has become another pretext to renew rhetoric on the further geo-political future of the ARC and protection of rights of the Russian community in the Ukrainian autonomy. Despite the aforementioned, in his interview to the German ARD TV Company on August 30, 2008, Russian Prime Minister V. Putin denied that Crimea is Russia's next goal and said “Crimea is not a controversial territory”.

“Unlike the conflict between the South Ossetia and Georgia, there was not any ethnic conflict in Crimea. There, inside Crimean society, complex processes are going on. There, there are problems of the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainian population and Russian population, Slavic population at least. Though it is a problem of Ukraine's domestic policy,” he added.

At the same time, it is difficult not to hear other statements of Russian Representative to NATO D. Rogozin, who stated about the possible protection of Russian citizens in Crimea and said, “We will ensure security of our citizens wherever they live, either among polar bears or in Africa or even in the USA. It is a constitutional obligation of our leadership to ensure life and human dignity of Russian citizens.” It is difficult to say how many citizens of Ukraine have Russian passports in the ARC. Different figures are mentioned but hypothetically, it is possible to imagine that this region could potentially be used to increase tension in Ukraine from outside. By no means referring to Crimean residents, the ethnic Russians, as a kind of the “5th column” in Ukraine, it can be assumed that some politicians and political movements can easily manipulate their natural interests.

The issue of a threat of pro-Russian separatism in Crimea is a popular topic. One of the reasons for discussions of this kind is the emergence of many pro-Russian radical organizations that declare total rejection of all Ukrainian and sometimes set themselves the annexation of Crimea to the RF as an object. Despite the fact that most of them are not numerous and can involve, at least several hundreds of persons in their actions, activity of such organizations is broadly covered in the media and creates a respective background in the information space of Ukraine and Russia. As before, old pro-Russian organizations and socio-political movements set up after the disintegration of the USSR are active. Yet they have mostly integrated into Ukrainian and Crimean politics and do not often allow making open separatist statements.

One of Crimea's specific features in the political dimension is the fact that socio-political relations here are often determined not only by political competition among various regional political elites and their search of tools of influence on economic processes in the autonomy but also by the ethno-political and ethno-religious

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situation, which has certain impact on socio-political issues acute for the ARC.

Some Crimean pro-Russian organizations take an active part in political struggle inside Ukraine, while others are "milling the wind" on moot points in Ukrainian-Russian relations and execute orders, often trying not to conceal that their activities are funded by the Russian Federation. As a rule, the latter actively oppose Ukraine's accession to NATO and withdrawal of the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) from Crimea.

It can be assumed that Crimean pro-Russian organizations will live up their activities in the future, when it is necessary for respective power institutions and forces in Ukraine. For instance, steps on Ukraine's path to integration into European structures are attended with more active actions of respective organizations on the peninsula. And the radical nature of actions of pro-Russian organizations enhances as the date of the withdrawal of the Russian BSF from Crimea in 2017 approaches. By inciting anti-NATO sentiments in Crimea, certain Russian forces attempt to create a situation of controlled chaos. Meanwhile, it has to be mentioned that political pro-Russian organizations of Crimea are uncoordinated and not numerous as before and, therefore, cannot produce strong impact on political processes in Ukraine.

Except for the current unsteady elements of the situation in the autonomy compared to other Ukrainian regions, there are its own specific problems determining the social development and political situation on the whole. These include the coordination of relations between national and regional authorities in promoting certain policies, peculiarities of Crimea's socio-economic development, ethno-political relations, risk of the socio-political instability and need to neutralize influence of foreign political factors on the internal situation in the ARC.

In general, ethno-political relations in the autonomy are determined by the interaction of the three largest ethnic groups of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and Russians. The ARC is the only administrative and territorial formation in a unitary Ukraine, where, by force of some historical circumstances and reasons, the ethnic Russians make up the majority of population. Under the 2001 National Census, their share amounts to 58.5% of Crimean residents. The share of the ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea was 24.4%. As a result of the mass return of the Crimean Tatars, their share in the total number of population reached 12.5%.

Unmet socio-economic, socio-cultural and political challenges of the Crimean Tatar community remain a major conflict factor of the ethno-political situation. A considerable part of conflict factors in Crimea is caused by a complex of reasons, among which there are numerous stereotypes against the Crimean Tatar community available in the consciousness of the Slavic majority of the Crimean population. Conflicts also sporadically emerge on political grounds and because of the generally unfavorable economic environment in Crimea. Impact of the above factors on the state of interethnic relations and the socio-political situation in the autonomy is growing in view of the existent "purpose anti-Tatar and Islamophobic information campaign".

By the way, different sociological studies prove that on the 16th year of the repatriation of the Crimean Tatars, the level of separation of the Ukrainians from this ethnic community is still high, which causes a disinclination to see these minority members among citizens of Ukraine though their stay on its territory as guests is admissible.

Prejudices and negative stereotypes against the Crimean Tatars ingrained in the mass consciousness of Crimea's population are effectively used by some Crimean politicians, who demonstrate ability to strategically build their political images on such a dangerous ground, gain electoral support, mobilize voters and, in the long run, get tools of satisfying interests of those financial and economic forces that strive to control resources, including land, in this region.

Meanwhile, national authorities need to consider cultural specificity of Crimea in their policies and not to approve decisions that are rather negatively interpreted in the autonomy and, thereby, aggravate prejudices against Ukraine.

Another consequence of the absence of a shared vision of the ethno-political future of the autonomy in Ukraine includes facts of the disregard of the available ethno-political challenges, while formulating certain tasks and decisions. Specifically, in the Government Program for the Socio-Economic Development of the ARC until 2017, only 3 out of 16 tasks are dedicated to solving issues related to the ethno-political sphere, which, in the Program's context, concerns exclusively areas of culture and education: to hold "passportization"; preserve and restore cultural and historical monuments of national and local concern; develop the cultural sphere of the region; maintain and enhance the available material and technical basis of cultural establishments; ensure government support to the development of Ukrainian and promote activities of ethno-cultural societies; carry out works on the restoration, museumification and renovation of units of cultural heritage; ensure the execution of the right to study in minority languages; and create adequate conditions of the education process by means of constructing secondary and pre-school education institutions. However, any concept of the ethno-political development has to consider dynamics of ethno-cultural changes in society and set priorities of government policy according to ethnic and cultural specificity of a certain ethnic community!

At the same time, an actual failure to perform some tasks of national authorities in the areas of regulating land relations and developing ethno-political legislation concerning the satisfaction of minority needs evidences the lack of coordination and interaction inside the vertical of power and unsatisfactory cooperation with local self-government bodies because the desired effects are not always produced. This could be explained by the absence of regular, not sporadic, coordination of actions of authorities in the process of setting objectives or implementing policies and improper budget funding for specific activities on the part of national authorities (the lack of resources). There are more than enough presidential decrees and government resolutions on Crimean problems but almost all of them are not applied and local authorities are not an exception to this rule. Among other things, these documents deal with the land, language and education issues. Specifically, local authorities voiced dissatisfaction with presidential initiatives in the humanitarian, information and education areas actually ignored them.

For example, at the July 2, 2008 session of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of the ARC, Deputy Speaker of the Crimean VR M. Bakharev commented the order of Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine I. Vakar-chuk on the broader use of Ukrainian at schools offering tuition in minority languages and called Head of the Council of Ministers of the ARC V. Plakida to oblige the Ministry of Education and Science of the ARC not to execute orders of the senior Ministry! And First Deputy Speaker of the Crimean VR and leader of the Russian Community of Crimea S. Tsekov stated that should the policy for Crimea's ukrainization pursued by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine be continued, he would personally, notwithstanding of his office of state official, call the autonomy's residents to resolute protest actions.

Relations between the center and political leadership of the ARC are generally characterized with weak central power in pursuing government policy in the region, which indicates the low level of the implementation of Kyiv decisions on the autonomy. The low effectiveness of cooperation is explained, to a large extent, by tactical assignments of political positioning of the presidential entourage. It is indisputably influenced by other processes in Kyiv, i.e. ambiguous relations of BYuT and OUPSD inside the parliamentary coalition and a permanent discussion of possibilities to form a broad coalition, which would also include the PR that totally controls (taking into account such a factor as foreign political influences) both the situation in the region in the social, political and economic areas and the process of distributing resources.

This political force, with regard to its cooperation with pro-Russian forces at the level of the ARC, continues demonstrating its loyalty to the use of myths and stereotypes towards ethnic communities in this multi-ethnic

region, which erodes the stability and predictability of the socio-political situation in Crimea and, thus, might produce various negative consequences. In this aspect, problems of ethnic communities are not properly solved, which evokes frustration of the very Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians living on the peninsula.

Hence, notwithstanding the autonomy's "uncontroversial territory", the objective of society and power is to make this region of Ukraine totally different from the "Achilles' heel" of the country as Crimea is often referred to. To this end, it is necessary to get rid of general Ukrainian trends, at least, one of them – the conversion of power into business and resources.